

# Imam Ahmad Raza : A Nexus to Antiquity

Allah's name (we) begin with, the Most Affectionate the Merciful

What people know about the great reviver of 14<sup>th</sup> century, the great Jurist, Muhaddith, Mufakkir, Mutakallim, Sufi, Teacher and author Imam Ahmad Raza al-Hanafi al-Qadri al-Barelvi (may Allah sanctify his secret) is only a quarter of his knowledge. The rest is still hidden under piles of books and in the hearts of scholars, common folks are still ignorant of it. The great Imam was not just a Sufi or a poet or Jurist, but the greatest stature of the Imam is that he was a Reviver *Mujaddid* and the responsibilities of a Reviver are of much more intensity than any other scholar. We must change our approach to look at the figure of the great Imam, which is getting to know him by his works, his biography and his ordinances. It is indeed a fact that scholars have done vast works and have suffered great hardships to introduce the books of the great Imam to the whole world. They have translated his books, simplified them, compiled them and put footnotes on them. Some examples of which are:

- (1) His Son Mufti al-Azam bil-Hind Imam Mustafa Raza Khan al-Qadri al-Noori (may Allah shower Noor and mercy upon his shrine) wrote down and compiled his Ordinances which later came to be known as '*Al-Malfooz*'.
- (2) His student and close companion Malak al-Ulama Imam Zafar Uddin al-Qadri al-Bihari (may Allah bless his shrine) compiled his most authentic biography which came to be known as '*Hayat e Ala Hazrat*'.
- (3) His great grandson The Grand Mufti of India Taj al-Shariah Imam Akhtar Raza Khan Qadri (may Allah shower Noor and

mercy upon his shrine) translated many of his works from Urdu language into Arabic and vice-versa.

- (4) One of his later followers Rasil al-Qalam Imam Arshadul Qadri (may Allah bless his shrine) simplified one of his works '*al-Amn wal Ula Li-Na'atil Mustafa bi-Da'fail Bala*' into contemporary Urdu which was later completed and published by his son Dr. Ghulam Zuquani as '*Kamalaat e Mustafa*'.
- (5) His poetry works were compiled under the name '*Hadaiq al-Bakhshish*'.
- (6) His compilation of Fiqh verdicts and epistles were compiled and published under the name '*al-Ata an-Nabawiyya fil- Fatawa al-Radhaviyya*'. This is a work in around 30 volumes containing around 6,000 verdicts.

Surely, many other works have been done on him but in this small articles I am unable to mention them all.

If we look at the works of the great Imam, he was a genius, an absolute epitome of religious understanding, he was a Faqeeh, a Jurist and it is one of the important aspects of his Life, traditionally scholars mention his work '*Kifl ul Faqeehil faahim fi Hukmi Qirtaas ad-daraahim*' as one his masterpieces in Hanafi Jurisprudence, where he has cleared all doubts on the value of currency notes being actually something with which transactions can be done.

Look at him from another perspective, he was the greatest Scholar on Prophetic narrations in his time, I am not saying this out of love, look at his '*Muneer al-Ain*', where he has mentioned about '*Dhaeef*' Hadiths and the reasons he has mentioned in cases where such Hadiths are not acceptable. Furthermore the way he has written on the kissing of thumbs and proven that it is no harm in doing it, Rather it is a great remedy for eye problems, that is unmatched and by far I have not seen

any scholar of our time doing such derivations and making such outstanding conclusions which leave the reader awestruck.

Talking about his poetry, that is something where his genius reaches another zenith and this is not exaggeration, trust me, the way he brings his knowledge into poetry that is a sight to see. I was reading one of his *Qasaid*, his '*Qaseeda e Noor*', and he has mentioned astrological terms and the terms of lunar cycle into poetry and how beautifully he has used them to praise the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). In another poetry he has mentioned terms of '*Mantiq*' logistics to praise the Prophet (peace be upon him), the same way Imam Bousiri (may Allah sanctify his secret) has used the concept of '*Jauhar*', to praise the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Another beauty of his poetic genius is his knowledge of '*Qaafiya*', he has an immense treasure of *Qarwafi* up his sleeves and he has used them extensively.

The most striking feature of his Life is his '*Hubb al-Rasool*', he was drowned into the ocean of Love of the Prophet (peace be upon him), his verdicts, his actions, his poetry and his whole life can be summarized into this very point. When he goes to perform his pilgrimage with his father he writes down a *Qaseeda* in the praise of his majesty the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and just talks about his deteriorating condition in love, he is dissolving into love and the level of '*Tawadhoa*' he has used in that is really heart melting. He says at one point: "*What disrespect is this, that this mouth is turned towards you (O dear Prophet)?, Yes, that is another thing that you are merciful and your qualities are forgiving.*" The great Imam gives out the notion that his face is not even worthy of turning towards the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and it is his benevolence that he is letting the Imam do so, at another place he says: "*O Master! (The Prophet) we Bedouins don't know the ways of respect, the only thing we have any sense of is begging*". This is the level of humility and humbleness the blessed Imam has.

Another important aspect of his life is the one upon which I would like to talk here, it is he being our *'Link to Past'*, Just look at his books, his writings you will find one thing in common, which I will point out soon, that be it quoting Imam Abul Qasim Abdul Kareem al-Qushayri's (may Allah sanctify his secret) *'Risala al-Qushayriyah'* in his book *'Ahlak al-Wahhabiyeen'* or quoting Meer Sayyed Abdul Wahid Bilgrami's (may Allah sanctify his secret) *'Sab e Sanabil Shareef'* in his various works , particularly his risala *'Ghaayat al-Tahqeeq'*, when I first read that risala one thing that I found interesting was that first the Imam writes an Arabic sermon in the beginning then he starts putting his evidences, first he mentions Qur'anic verses, then Hadiths after them any quotations of Sahaba, henceforth he mentions the positions of great scholarly giants in that context and after that he puts forth his analysis of the topic. A very subtle but effective thing that he does is when he mentions the name of the Beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) or of other Prophets (upon them be peace) or Sahaba (Allah is pleased with them) or any other scholar or Sufi (may Allah sanctify their secrets) the level of respect and reverence he uses, that is absolutely marvelous. This is the very point I would like to tell my readers that in these places he is actually introducing the giants to you, when quotes Imam Qushayri he is actually making you meet him or when he is mentioning his Shiekh he is actually introducing him to you and his books. When he does that he not only writes a book but also point out various other books and tells his readers to go look for these books. He is not only quoting the *Risala al-Qushayriyah* but actually telling you to read it yourself and that's how he is acting as a link to the past scholars. From here I form the firm basis of my point that he knows exactly what he is doing, And that is the work of a reviver, he is not here to invent anything, but to join the broken links to the glorious past. He is actually displaying in all these aspects that do not consider him to generate something, he is actually following his

predecessors and subtly telling you to follow them. In his risala '*Ghaayat al-Tahqeeq*' the way he mentions the name of Imam Ali and Hadhrat Abu Bakr (Allah is pleased with them both) is really an invitation for all people to read and analyze it, he mentions them with such reverence and respect and in turn proves his point with magnificent eloquence.

It is really a need of the time that people from all sects read his books, Rather it is my recommendation to all those people who think ill of the Imam. They should at least once in their lives read his books without any prejudices and biased opinions. They will find out that they are missing a complete genius of our near past from whom there are numerous things to learn and bring about a change in our lives.

Imam Ahmad Raza's (may Allah sanctify his secret) mission is as clear as the Sun, to love the lovers of Allah and his Prophet and to hate the enemies of Allah and his Prophet, is there any harm in doing so? The answer is NO! and a big NO! Then why not follow the true footsteps of *Ahlus Sunnati Wal Jama'ah* and get to know this '*Celebrated Genius of the East*'.

May Allah grant us true understanding of the *Deen* and may we stay firm on the *Maslak of Ahlus Sunnati wal Jama'ah* which in this era is known as *Maslak e Ala Hadhrat. Ameen*, O Lord of the worlds! accept this through the mediation of the Prophet of mercy (upon him be countless blessings and complete salutations)

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- In hope of Allah's mercy  
Sag e Bargah e Tajushariyah (Allah is pleased with him)

*Fardeen Ahmad Khan Razvi*

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